



Parallel Event:  
**“Unaccompanied Children on the Move:  
 Preserving their Dignity and Rights”**

March 15  
 11h-13h – Room XXIV

Co-organized by:  
**Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva, International Catholic  
 Migration Commission, and Caritas Internationalis**

Co-sponsored by:



Modern means of social communication remind us each hour of the day and night about the urgent need to protect and welcome of some *65 million forcibly displaced persons*, including over 21 million refugees, 3 million asylum seekers and over 40 million internally displaced persons.”<sup>1</sup> These statistics might easily be ignored, but it is much harder to escape the human tragedies and indignities portrayed by former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon: *“many asylum seekers and migrants are detained, and*

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<sup>1</sup> Outcome Document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, United Nations General Assembly, document A70/L.61, September 2016.

*their reception is sometimes far from welcoming. Xenophobic and racist rhetoric seems to be not only on the rise, but also becoming more socially and politically accepted.<sup>2</sup>*

The fact, is that half of the world's refugees are children under the age of eighteen years<sup>3</sup>, and that thousands take flight without the protection of parents or other family members. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees informs that some 98,400 asylum claims were lodged by unaccompanied and separated children in 2015 alone.<sup>4</sup> UNICEF estimates that, in 2014 alone, some 60 million people were chased from the own homes by war, violence, and persecution and that half of these were children, including those were left without adult care or supervision.<sup>5</sup>

Children on the move often lack voice and political or social influence in most receiving countries, so their needs are often forgotten or ignored. Often, they have been sent by the parents to seek protection and a brighter future outside the tragic situations of war, civil conflict, abject poverty, religious or ethnic persecution, or of complete social and economic collapse in the lands of their birth. However, they face the great risk of vulnerability to human traffickers, sexual predators, and other unscrupulous persons who wish to cause harm to children and adolescents.

During 2016, several events and programmes called for serious attention to the challenges of large-scale movements of refugees and other forced migrants, including the situation of children. Among these events were the World Humanitarian Summit; the Global Refugee Youth Consultations; UNHCR's annual consultations with non-governmental organizations; programmes related to the UN Human Rights Council focusing on the rights of children on the move; the UN General Assembly

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly *In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants*: Report of the Secretary General, A/70/59, 21 April 2016.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, Concept Paper for High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection, *Children on the Move*, Geneva, December 2016.

<sup>5</sup> *Protecting Children on the Move*, A Briefing Paper by UNICEF, November 2015, p. 2.

Summit addressing large movements of refugees and migrants; and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Dialogue with on Protection Challenges analysing the situation of child migrants.

The Holy See and Catholic-inspired organizations have served as active participants in these events and, at global, national and local levels, the Catholic Church and other religious organizations serve “on the front lines of conflict and acute displacement crises”<sup>6</sup>, are “strong advocates for respecting human dignity and empowering vulnerable people who are in the margins of our societies,” and “often play a key role in initiating or supporting efforts to resolve disputes and consolidating peace.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to sustain the concern and attention, in particular, to persons subjected to forced migration, during the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Permanent Mission of the Holy See in Geneva, the International Catholic Migration Commission, and the Caritas Internationalis are co-organizing a parallel event on “Unaccompanied Children on the Move: Preserving their Dignity and Rights”

Objectives for the Parallel event include:

1. Examine the number and causes of increased movements of unaccompanied minor migrants.
2. Analyze the causes, impact, and vulnerabilities resulting from migration by unaccompanied children.
3. Identify the protection gaps between theory and practice of respecting and promoting the rights of children on the move, especially of unaccompanied minor migrants.
4. Present good practice models of preserving the dignity and rights of such children, particularly those facilitated by faith-inspired organizations.
5. Make recommendations to States and non-governmental organizations on how best to ensure the rights and dignity of such children, in accord with international and national human rights

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<sup>6</sup> “High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 12-13 December 2012, Faith and Protection: A Concept Paper, ” <http://www.unhcr.org/501a3ed99.html>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

commitments, with the principles and teaching of major religious traditions, and the general commitment of people of good will.

### **Program:**

1. Call to order and overview of event by the Moderator, Ms. **Kelly Ryan**, Founder and former Chair of the US Government Task Force on Unaccompanied and Separated Minors
2. “Welcome and introduction” by His Excellency Archbishop **Ivan Jurkovič**, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva
3. “Putting Human Rights Principles and Agreements into Action for Minor Migrants”, by His Excellency Ambassador **William Lacy Swing**, Director General of the International Organization for Migration
4. “Pope Francis Promoting Solidarity with and Protection of Children on the Move, Especially the Unaccompanied” by Reverend **Fabio Baggio**, Co-Undersecretary, Migrant and Refugee Section, Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development of the Holy See
5. “UNHCR: Special efforts to Serve Children on the Move, including ‘Live, Learn and Play Safe’ and ‘Beyond Detention’” by Ms. **Carol Batchelor**, Director of International Protection, UNHCR
6. Video Presentation of ICMC/UNHCR Best Interest Determinations for Unaccompanied and Separated Children on the Move in Shire, Ethiopia
7. “Unaccompanied minors. Best practices and challenges in a context of Non-Detention” by Ms. **Elisa Manna**, Caritas Rome’s Research Center
8. “Children Caught in the Middle: The Plight of Unaccompanied Children on the Move at the border between Mexico and USA”, Fr. **Juan Carlos Quirarte Méndes**, IIMA, SDB, Director, Desarrollo Juvenil A.C., Juarez, Mexico
9. Discussion and Questions
10. Summary and Adjournment by Moderator